

Coordinating health & health care  
for a thriving Kansas



1-11-2010

# The Pulse



## KHPA News and Events

### New Wellness Contractor

Effective Jan. 1, Alere officially began work as the new Health and Wellness contractor for the State Employee Health Plan HealthQuest program.

Alere was selected by the Kansas Health Care Commission from among 19 vendors submitting proposals.

HealthQuest offers SEHP members resources to manage their health, including a 24/7 nurse line, life-style health coaching, and tobacco cessation assistance.

For more information, call 1-888-275-1205.

### Save the Date

**Monday, Jan. 11:** Legislative session begins. Gov. Mark Parkinson delivers State of the State address at 7 p.m. Check local radio and TV listings for

## 2010 Policy Agenda Focuses on Lowering Costs, Improving Health of All Kansans

As the 2010 legislative session begins, the Kansas Health Policy Authority Board is recommending policies aimed at controlling health care costs, improving the efficiency of existing health care programs in Kansas, and improving the health of all Kansans.

“This is a very different kind of agenda from the ones we’ve offered in the past,” said KHPA Acting Executive Director Andy Allison. “In addition to the new policies we’re recommending, this agenda also focuses on what KHPA does on a daily basis to coordinate health and health care policy for the state.”

Allison added that this year’s agenda also reflects the changed political and economic realities facing Kansas and the nation.

“The debate over how, or even whether, to expand coverage to the uninsured has clearly shifted to Washington,” Allison said. “Meanwhile, the economic downturn makes it impractical for the state to consider launching expensive new programs. So the new policy recommendations this year are focused on things the state can do easily to lower state costs and improve public health.”

The complete [2010 policy agenda](#) is available on the KHPA website. It was approved by the KHPA Board in November with input from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment regarding public health priorities. Organized around the agency’s [six vision principles](#), it highlights accomplishments the agency has already achieved, ongoing initiatives, new policy recommendations, and long-range goals for the future.

Some of the new policies being recommended are identical to those offered in the past, while others are either new proposals or modified from earlier proposals. They include:

- Enacting a statewide Clean Indoor Air Law
- Enacting regulations on vending machines in schools to require healthy options
- Increasing tobacco user fees to reduce smoking rates
- Expanding early detection cancer screening programs
- Increasing funding for the Kansas Coordinated School Health Program
- Promoting health policies that prevent the onset of chronic diseases
- Leveling professional reimbursement rates
- Engaging in management of mental health prescription drugs
- Streamlining the use of prior authorization
- Promoting planning and policies to assure an adequate health care workforce in Kansas
- Preparing options to meet budget targets
- And positioning the state for possible federal health reform

## Meetings & Events

**Wed., Jan. 13,** Drug Utilization Review Board meeting.  
**Time:** 10 a.m.  
**Location:** HP Enterprise Services Bldg., 6700 S. Topeka Blvd., Bldg. 283, "J" St., Topeka. (Forbes Industrial Park)

**Thurs., Jan. 14.** KHPA Board Executive Committee.  
**Time:** 3:30–5 p.m.  
**Location:** KHPA, Conf. Room 9-E, 900 SW Jackson St., 9th Floor, Topeka.

**Tues., Jan. 19.** KHPA Board Finance-Audit Committee.  
**Time:** 3-4 p.m.  
**Location:** KHPA, conf. Room 9-E, 900 SW Jackson St., 9th Floor, Topeka.

**Tues., Jan. 26.** KHPA Board meeting.  
**Time:** 8:30 a.m.—3:30 p.m. (with working lunch)  
**Location:** HP Enterprise Services Bldg., 6700 S. Topeka Blvd., Bldg. 283, "J" Street., Topeka. (Forbes Industrial Park)

## CHIP Expansion Takes Effect with New Year

Thousands of Kansas children will become eligible for low-cost health insurance starting Jan. 1 thanks to an expansion of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

When the new year begins, the eligibility limit for the Kansas CHIP program will increase from 200 percent of the current poverty level to 250 percent of the 2008 poverty level. That translates to \$44,000 a year for a family of three, or \$53,000 a year for a family of four.

Families with children in CHIP pay premiums ranging from \$20 to \$75 per-family per-month, depending on income.

"This is a significant opportunity for Kansas families who can't afford private health insurance for their children," said KHPA Acting Executive Director Andy Allison. "Improving children's health is a top priority for everyone, and one of the most important steps in accomplishing that is to make sure children have access to affordable coverage so they can get the care they need. This expansion will make that easier for thousands of working families who either can't afford or don't have access to private insurance."

Kansas lawmakers first authorized the expansion in 2008, subject to additional federal funding becoming available. That federal funding became available in 2009 when Congress passed the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA). Following passage of that act, the 2009 Kansas Legislature approved funding (\$1.2 million) to cover the state's share of the expansion.

Currently, people applying for either Medicaid or CHIP benefits must submit hard-copy applications which are available on the [KHPA website](#). Applications are also available at all area offices of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services.

## Praeger OK's Coventry Acquisition of Preferred Health

Kansas Insurance Commissioner Sandy Praeger announced Dec. 28 that she had approved the sale of Preferred Health Systems Insurance Co. to Coventry Health Care, subject to certain conditions.

Both companies serve as third-party administrators to the Kansas State Employee Health Plan which is administered by KHPA.

Conditions include requirements that Coventry maintain an adequate network of providers to deliver services and that it maintain an office in Wichita dedicated to providing service to PHS matters through 2011.

SEHP Director Doug Farmer said Coventry officials had assured him the merger will not affect plan members or their benefits in 2010.

"The Pulse" is a publication by the KHPA Communications Team distributed weekly during the legislative session and less frequently when the legislature is not in session. If you have questions or comments, contact the Public Information Officer Peter Hancock at 785/296.5603 or [peter.hancock@khpas.gov](mailto:peter.hancock@khpas.gov)

